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Recommended Citation

University of Dayton, "Wedding Precludes Star Wars Fan from Seeing 'Clones,' Spider-Man to Lead the Pack of Summer Fantasy Films" (2002). *News Releases*. 10052.
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May 1, 2002
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NEWS RELEASE

WEDDING PRECLUDES STAR WARS FAN FROM SEEING 'CLONES,' SPIDER-MAN TO LEAD THE PACK OF SUMMER FANTASY FILMS

DAYTON, Ohio — Only certain things in life would keep diehard *Star Wars* fan Mike Berger from seeing one of the first showings of *Episode II: Attack of the Clones*. The pertinent one is his wedding, scheduled for May 18, the day after the movie's release.

"We'll be busy, so sadly, I'm forced to wait until after our honeymoon in the Caribbean, depending what the release date is in St. Martin," Berger said, laughing. "I suggested rescheduling the wedding, but my fiancée didn't go for that."

From Spidey to Frodo, the nation's movie theaters will be filled with fantasy beginning in May and running straight through to December. Characters popping up on the way range from young Harry Potter to Jason of hockey-mask fame, the conflicted Anakin Skywalker, the bug-busting Men in Black and Captain Picard aboard the Enterprise.

Even the *X-Files* is getting a boost from its run-up to the series' finale.

"Why are people interested?" muses Jim Farrelly, English professor and director of the film minor program at the University of Dayton. "Fantasy movies give us the opportunity to step out of the limits of reality and find adventures that are safe. They give us heroes we can idealize who will always be there to save us from evil. We expect the worst and have all our emotions aroused and almost go through a catharsis. The hero triumphs over evil in all of them."

The fantasy genre includes sci-fi and horror — any subcategory that requires a suspension of disbelief by the audience, said Farrelly, who has taught film and literature courses for 14 years.

"We get unlikely heroes in these works, not a Hercules with great physical strength," he said. "Peter Parker was very ordinary until he was affected by radioactivity."

The presence of evil is integral to the appeal of fantasy films, Farrelly said. "The first Tolkein film (*The Fellowship of the Ring*) gave us a view of how powerful evil is, and we will see it in *Attack of the Clones* too. What leads Anakin to turn to the dark side? That's the most

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interesting thing about this trilogy. Luke was tempted by the dark side and deflected it. In this one a Jedi knight is lost, and I want to see how that is played out."

Speculation is that Skywalker will come to the brink of darkness in Episode II, but the darkest days will be saved for Episode III. Darth Vader is not on the official list of characters for the middle episode, but is listed for the third.

Berger wasn't as disappointed with *Episode I: Phantom Menace* as many others were, and he saw the film five times while it was in release in theaters. "A lot of people like to rag on that movie, but it was only a victim of its own hype," said Berger, 24, former president of the University of Dayton fantasy and science fiction appreciation club. "People went to see it with 20 years of interpretation behind them. I thought it was a good movie with some technical flaws."

Berger, who will receive his UD master's degree in communication May 5, is "hotly anticipating" *Attack of the Clones*. "From what I've heard, Episode I contains a lot of the back plot and set-up for II and III. In this one, Anakin is kind of a punk, but that's what he's supposed to be. He defies the council and falls in love with Luke's mother. In the arrogance and confidence of Anakin, we can see the hubris of Vader. He ends this movie a little wiser and a little bitter, but still on the light side."

Will he and fiancée Heather Monigan take a break from the beach to see the film?

Unlikely, Berger said. The bride-to-be hasn't seen any of the original trilogy and wasn't too impressed by *Phantom Menace*.

"But she saw that one first, that's part of the problem," he said.

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